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**U.S. CHARGES 22 DEFENDANTS IN ALLEGED FRAUDULENT IDENTIFICATION
DOCUMENT RING BASED IN CHICAGO'S LITTLE VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

Chicago cell leader allegedly ordered murders of competitors in Mexico

CHICAGO – The bustling counterfeit identification document business – which allegedly generates profits between approximately \$2 million and \$3 million a year for one entrenched Mexican-based crime organization alone – in and around the Little Village Discount Mall at 26th Street and Albany in Chicago's Little Village community has become "competitive and violent," according to federal criminal charges unsealed today. In fact, it turned deadly recently for one of four former members of the organization who apparently stole computer equipment and/or software from the organization to begin their own fraudulent identification document enterprise in Indiana. Yesterday, federal agents led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested **Julio Leija-Sanchez**, the alleged Chicago cell leader the organization in Little Village, on federal charges for allegedly paying \$3,000 and conspiring with co-defendant **Gerardo Salazar-Rodriguez**, a fugitive believed to be in Mexico, and others to kill two of the fledgling competitors known as "Montes" and "Bruno."

Salazar-Rodriguez allegedly discussed the execution of Montes in Mexico between March 31 and April 3, shooting him 15 times in an effort to portray the murder of Montes, who drove a taxi, as a robbery, according to the charges against both men and 20 other defendants. The complaint alleges that in an April 3 telephone call between Leija-Sanchez and Salazar-Rodriguez discussing the planned murder of Bruno, Leija-Sanchez said, “you know what would be good, to ctach him around where you got Montes, kidnap him, and take him over by Pachuca, far away And then you take him to Nabor, so that he can cut him up in pieces.”

Julio Leija-Sanchez, 31, of Oak Lawn, was charged with one count of conspiracy to commit murder outside the United States. More than a dozen pages of a 113-page ICE affidavit unsealed today detail a series of telephone calls in which Leija-Sanchez allegedly discussed killing Montes and Bruno with Salazar-Rodriguez, 34, between February 12 and April 18. Their conversations were among numerous calls that agents intercepted pursuant to court-authorized wiretaps since February, during the final months of the investigation, code-named *Operation Paper Tiger*, that ICE began in late 2003.

In all,22 defendants, including Julio Leija-Sanchez and Salazar-Rodriguez were charged in the same criminal complaint with participating in a 3½-year conspiracy to illegally produce identification documents, authentication features and false identification documents. Yesterday, 12 of the defendants were arrested in Chicago, while 10 others are fugitives, including four believed to be in Mexico, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Elissa A. Brown, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Investigations in Chicago.

ICE, FBI and Secret Service agents executed search warrants simultaneously at four locations: a basement apartment at 5366 South Campbell, which allegedly served as the primary office where fraudulent identification documents were produced, and where they seized two computer towers, printers, scanners, a cutting board, hundreds of blank identification cards, including social security cards and approximately \$1,300 cash; the residences of Julio Leija-Sanchez in Oak Lawn and another alleged cell leader, **Elias Marquez**, 51, of West 64th Street, Chicago, where two laptop computers and cash preliminarily estimated in excess of \$200,000 was seized; and at Nuevo Foto Munoz, a photo shop inside the Discount Mall at 3105 West 26th St.

The 12 defendants arrested yesterday were scheduled to have their initial court appearances beginning at 11 a.m. today in Courtroom 2541 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Sidney I. Schenkier in U.S. District Court. A list of the defendants and their custody or fugitive status is attached.

“These ICE arrests represent a significant setback to one of the largest and most sophisticated illegal document fraud rings in the United States,” Ms. Brown said. “Criminals and even terrorists can use fraudulent documents to conceal themselves in our society, which poses a major homeland security vulnerability. Working with our law enforcement partners, ICE will continue to identify and shut down these vulnerabilities,” she added.

Ms. Brown and Mr. Fitzgerald announced the charges together with Tim W. Viertel, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the U.S. Secret Service; and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Chicago Police Department and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service also assisted in the investigation, which is continuing, the officials said.

According to the complaint affidavit, the fraudulent document organization originated in Mexico and is affiliated with a Mexican family named Castoreña-Ibarra. ICE agents around the country believe that the organization produces false documents in several U.S. cities, including Denver, Los Angeles and Chicago. Information developed during the investigation indicates that the organization generates millions of dollars in illegal proceeds each year in Chicago alone. Julio Leija-Sanchez allegedly assumed control of the organization in Chicago after his brother, **Manuel Leija-Sanchez**, 40, who also is among the 22 charged, was deported in May 2006. Manuel Leija-Sanchez allegedly still exercises leadership of the organization from Mexico.

The organization allegedly recruits illegal aliens to come to Chicago and sell false documents on street corners in the Little Village neighborhood, where individuals solicit business for the organization overtly. These individuals sell all sorts of false identification documents – such as driver’s licenses purportedly issued by a variety of states, immigration documents such as Resident Alien Cards (Green Cards), and other purportedly government-issued documents. In just one location in the area of Albany and 26th Street alone, there are as many as 15 to 20 illegal aliens at any one time selling false documents, the charges allege. When these sellers locate a customer, they obtain a photograph and personal information, such as name and address that the customer wants on a particular card. Once these sellers have accumulated such information from enough customers, one of the sellers will send that information to a document production facility where the false documents are made.

Members of the organization are primarily of Mexican descent, but the ethnicity of their customers varies, including American, Polish, Indian, Algerian, Arab, Mexican, Nigerian, Canadian, Haitian, Pakistani, and Asian. Law enforcement is unaware of any occasion in which the

organization declined selling fraudulent identification documents to a customer who had sufficient money to purchase the documents, the complaint states.

The affidavit describes various positions held by members of the organization, including vendors, customers, runners, lookouts and manufacturers. There may be between two and six manufacturers working in an office at any one time. Approximately eight to 10 street vendors are employed per shift in the parking lot of and inside the Discount Mall, with two shifts per day – about 9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m., and about 1:30 to 8 p.m.

The charges allege that the various positions were held by the following defendants: **organization leader in Mexico** – Manuel Leija-Sanchez; **Chicago cell leader** – Julio Leija-Sanchez; **office manager and shift supervisor** – Elias Marquez; **street supervisors** – Eduardo Molina-Vasquez, Antonio Marquez and Chispa; **street vendors** – Miguel Cepeda, Jose Cortez-Perez, Armando Davila, Ricardo Gonzalez-Marquez, Julio Cesar Hernandez-Lopez, Oscar Monteil-Gerrido, Rafael Morales, Alfredo Muniz, Luis Perez, Oscar Perigrino, and Ricardo Quintero-Lopez; **runners** – Oscar Perigrino and Alfredo Muniz; **lookout** – Angel Martin Dorantes-Vasquez; and **smuggler** – Raul Gonzalez-Marquez.

The complaint alleges that the organization is also involved in the smuggling of illegal aliens into the United States from Mexico. Once these individuals arrive in Chicago, the organization provides them false identification, and they then pay off their debt to those who smuggled them here by working for the organization.

It further alleges that the organization also requires technical support and office supplies to maintain the fraudulent document enterprise. The technical support and supplies come primarily

through sources in Mexico, with Julio Leija-Sanchez's wife, Cathy, later identified as **Caterina Zapien-Ruiz**, 28, of Oak Lawn, often coordinating the purchases of supplies from Mexico.

Based on undercover purchases and information obtained from cooperating sources, law enforcement believes the organization sells as many as 50 to 100 sets of fraudulent identification documents each day, charging customers approximately \$200 to \$300 cash per "set." A set consists of a Social Security card and either an Immigration "green card" or a State driver's license. Each vendor in the organization is obligated to provide approximately \$140 cash per set of documents to the organization and keeps the remaining profit, the charges allege. According to an intercepted call from Julio Leija-Sanchez in February, he said: "I'm telling you, we've been here for 20 years, and a couple of times they have caught people. Not us."

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michelle Nasser Weiss, Andrew Porter and David Buvinger.

If convicted, conspiracy to produce fraudulent identification documents carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. In addition, Julio Leija-Sanchez alone faces a maximum penalty of life in prison if convicted of conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country. Note, however, that the Court would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed.

The public is reminded that a complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

United States v. Julio Leija-Sanchez, et al.

JULIO LEIJA-SANCHEZ, also known as “Rogelio Garcia-Salazar,” “Adrian Perez-Benitez,” “Cesar Juarez,” “Savino Zapiel,” “Rogelio Garcia,” “Carlos Becerra Velasquez,” “Larry,” and “Salivas;” 31, of Oak Lawn; arrested in Chicago;

MIGUEL CEPEDA, aka “Muta,” “Cesar Ortiz,” and “El Monstro;” 26, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago;

JOSE CORTEZ-PEREZ, aka “Bigotes,” “Bigos,” “Aramon Montero-Cortel,” “Roberto Castro,” “Ramon Gomez,” “Alberto Gomez-Ramirez,” “Spider,” and “Tarantula;” 42, of Cicero; fugitive;

ARMANDO DAVILA, aka “Bikini” and “Tanque;” 26, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago;

ANGEL MARTIN DORANTES-VASQUEZ, aka “Angel Dorantes,” “Martin,” “Botas,” and “Vaquero;” 35, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago;

RAUL GONZALEZ-MARQUEZ, aka “Raul Marquez-Gonzalez,” “Raul Marquez,” “Raul Gonzalez,” “Rauline,” “Raulin,” and “Rulas;” 58, of Wood Dale, believed to be in Mexico;

RICARDO GONZALEZ-MARQUEZ, aka “Rico,” “Ricos,” and “Chino;” 54, of Wood Dale; arrested in Chicago;

JULIO CESAR HERNANDEZ-LOPEZ, aka “Pabo,” “Pablo Hernandez,” and “Pavo;” 36, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago;

MANUEL LEIJA-SANCHEZ, aka “Reglas,” “Manuel Sanchez-Leija,” “Vincente Vince,” “Aguilar,” “Ricardo Leiba,” “Marcos a/k/a “Miguelito,” “Moco,” and “Enrique Felix;” 40, of Mexico City; believed to be in Mexico;

ANTONIO MARQUEZ, aka “Topo,” “Tomatillo,” and “Topoillo;” 35, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago;

ELIAS MARQUEZ, aka “Tio” and “Don;” 51, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago;

EDUARDO MOLINA-VASQUEZ, aka “Caracol,” “Arturo Vasquez-Laguna,” “David Ramirez-Montez,” “Edwardo Molina,” “Arturo Salizar” and “Rott;” 32, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago;

OSCAR MONTIEL-GERRIDO, aka “Rambo,” and “Rambito;” 29, of Chicago; fugitive;

RAFAEL MORALES, aka “Mollejas;” 36, of Chicago; fugitive;

ALFREDO MUNIZ, aka “Chuy,” “Lobos,” and “Chucas;” 30, of Chicago; fugitive;

LUIS PEREZ, aka “Ronas;” 23, of Chicago; fugitive;

OSCAR PERIGRINO, aka “Primate,” and “Juan Carlos Sandoval-Hernandez;” 34, of Chicago; fugitive;

RICARDO QUINTERO-LOPEZ, aka “Porki,” “El Chato,” “Chicharon,” “Ramon Cisneros,” and “Cochino;” 33, of Cicero; arrested in Chicago;

GERARDO SALAZAR-RODRIGUEZ, aka “Larossa,” “Chapulin,” and “Labrosa;” 34, of Mexico City; believed to be in Mexico;

CATHY LNU, aka Caterina Zapien-Ruiz, 28, of Oak Lawn; arrested in Chicago;

FNU/LNU, aka “**CHATO**,” age unknown, of Mexico City, believed to be in Mexico;

Claudio LNU, aka “**CHISPA**,” “Dingo,” and Claudio Carrillo-Fuentes, 38, of Chicago; arrested in Chicago.

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